

# The 1920's

United State History ACP  
Social Studies Department  
Wellesley High School  
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Social Studies Department

# 1920s

## Essential Question:

- What makes the 1920s the beginning of Modern America?

## Focus Questions:

- What was the post-WWI atmosphere in the United States?
- To what extent did the post-WWI atmosphere lead to the guilty verdict in the Sacco and Vanzetti court case?
- In what ways was the 1920s a “return to normalcy”?
- Was the Harlem Renaissance a success for African-Americans? Explain.
- Explain and analyze the paradoxes of the 1920s.

# ARC OF JUSTICE

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A SAGA OF RACE,  
CIVIL RIGHTS, AND MURDER  
IN THE JAZZ AGE



KEVIN BOYLE

HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY • NEW YORK

## PROLOGUE

AMERICA: 1925

The migrants filled the train stations of the South every day in the summer of 1925, waiting on ramshackle wooden platforms of crossroads towns such as Opelousas, Louisiana, and Andalusia, Alabama, and in cantilevered caverns such as Atlanta's Union Station. When the northbound trains pulled in, hissing and steaming, the travelers picked up cardboard suitcases bought at five-and-dimes or battered trunks carried since freedom came. Summoning up their courage, they strode past the Pullman porters—race men like themselves—making their way down the platforms to the grimy Jim Crow cars, settling into their seats for long rides north.

The landscapes rolling past the tense faces looked familiar: the seas of cotton fields that flowed from the Mississippi River to the Georgia coast; the tobacco plantations that ran from North Carolina to the outskirts of Washington, D.C.; the squalid lumber camps of East Texas; the blackened coal towns of Appalachia; and the rough mill villages of the Carolina Piedmont. Every place they passed bore the brand of segregation and the Jim Crow laws. Every station had its "whites" and "coloreds" signs hanging above separate waiting rooms. Every view had its hidden terrors.

Eight men had been lynched by white mobs in the first half of 1925, a quiet year by previous standards. Black newspapers like the *Chicago Defender* and the *Pittsburgh Courier* had given the atrocities front-page coverage. Porters had tucked the papers into their bags and carried



them home to the South, to the barbershops and the roadhouses, the churches and the cafés. So the travelers had to wonder: Was that collection of 'sharecroppers' shacks slipping by as the train passed Greenwood, Mississippi, the place where a few months ago a posse murdered Hal Winters because he dared defend his daughter from the landlord's advances? Was that gnarled tree on the horizon just beyond Scarboro, Georgia, the site where a mob doused Robert Smith in gasoline and set him ablaze in March?<sup>2</sup>

Gradually, the world outside the filthy windows became less and less familiar. At some point, the cotton fields gave way to wheat and corn; the rolling hills of Appalachia sloped into the flatlands of the Midwest. Mining camps gave way to factory towns, where the trains slowed to crawls as they passed mammoth warehouses and crossed street after nameless street. When the trains pulled into stations here, the migrants saw no signs for whites or coloreds.

In the early days of the migration, during the Great War, travelers sometimes celebrated crossing into the North by breaking into song or prayer; but so many migrants had made the trip north now—almost a million southern-born blacks since 1917—that the joy was tempered. They knew now that northern whites were as capable of brutality and murder as southern men. Rampaging whites had killed twenty-three blacks during a week of rioting in Chicago in the bitter summer of 1919.<sup>3</sup>

Yet it was still hard to remain calm as the trains reached the outskirts of one of the great cities, where the industrial districts alone dwarfed anything the South could claim. Gary's vast steelworks, one of the wonders of the modern world, sprawled across the prairie south of Chicago. The streets of Trenton and Hoboken were warrens of tool shops and warehouses. On the banks of the listless Rouge River just outside Detroit, Henry Ford was building an automobile factory large enough to employ all of Nashville or Norfolk.

The migrants grew increasingly excited as the distant, hazy outlines of the downtown skylines appeared. Pillars of steel and glass gradually filled the cars' windows. Even the smallest skyscrapers—the twenty-one-story Flatiron Building in lower Manhattan or the imposing Book-Cadillac Hotel in downtown Detroit—would have been landmarks almost anywhere in the South. Here they faded into the shadows of buildings that seemed to soar upward forever. Chicago's newly opened Wrigley Building stood majestically above the Loop, its brilliantly illuminated tower drawing all eyes, day or night. In New York, the

Woolworth Buildings elegant terra-cotta façade reached almost eight hundred feet into the sky, higher than any other building in the world. Behind those structures rose the skeletons of the next generation of skyscrapers, sure to be even taller, even more stunning.<sup>4</sup>

The nation's cities sparkled in the summer of 1925. New York and Chicago, with more than two million residents each, were among the largest cities in the Western world, while Detroit, home to the fabulous new auto industry, was America's great boomtown, an industrial juggernaut of unprecedented power. Europe's cultural hegemony had died in the course of the Great War, its lifeblood drained away in the mud of Flanders's fields. Urban America filled the void, drowning out the ancien régime's death knell with the pounding of the jackhammer and the riotous joy of the jazz band.<sup>5</sup>

New York, Chicago, and Detroit coursed with cash in the mid-1920s. The war had made the United States the world's banker. The great American investment houses—J. P. Morgan, Goldman Sachs, Lehman Brothers—managed staggering sums, pouring international wealth into the soaring stock market and swelling corporate coffers. Manufacturers pushed their companies to new heights. Backed by the investment houses, many consolidated their operations. By the summer of 1925, the economy was awash in mergers, each larger and more spectacular than the last. Sprawling factories, marvels of machinery, poured out wonderful new products as merchants battled to build the grand stores befitting them. In 1924, Macy's completed additions that brought its floor space to two million square feet. The next spring, Detroit's leading retailer, J. L. Hudson, launched construction of a store twenty-one stories high, the world's tallest, and as lavish as anything Macy's or Marshall Field's could muster. The cities literally glowed with salesmanship, the new science of the 1920s. In the spring of 1925, a giant Moses towered over Times Square, advertising Cecil B. DeMille's epic *The Ten Commandments*. Every few minutes, a flash of electric light struck the tablets he held over his head.<sup>6</sup>

The cities' sparkle wasn't simply financial. It was also cultural. Massive immigration in the late nineteenth century had made the major urban centers strikingly polyglot places. By the turn of the century, the foreign-born and their children far outnumbered the native-born in almost every large city. The war slowed the mass migration from Europe, but it launched the Great Migration of Negroes from the

South. There were fifty-seven hundred blacks living in Detroit in 1910, ninety-one thousand in New York. Fifteen years later, Detroit had eighty-one thousand colored citizens, New York almost three hundred thousand.<sup>7</sup>

The flood of people—foreign-born and native-born, white and black—fit no single profile. Some of the newcomers were learned; others couldn't read or write. Some had spent their lives in cities; others had never been beyond the boundaries of their villages. A minority were professionals: businessmen and teachers, doctors and lawyers, priests, ministers, and rabbis. Most were working people who filled the factories, built the homes, scrubbed the floors, and nursed the babies of the well-to-do. These new residents brought more than brawn to the cities, though. They brought their religions, their politics, their institutions, and their art. They jammed the streets on the feast days of their village saints and they emptied them on the Day of Atonement. They talked of revolution in the cafés of Greenwich Village and of patronage politics in the saloons of working-class Chicago. They opened tiny storefront churches and substantial fraternal lodges. They rushed to the vaudeville theaters, where Jewish entertainers honed their craft, and to the ghetto dancehalls, where ragtime bands pushed the boundaries of American music. And they elbowed their way into the cities' public life. By the early 1900s, ethnic politicians filled city council seats and mayors' offices in city after city.

At first, native-born Americans were almost universally appalled by the world that the black and white migrants were building on the Lower East Side of New York or Chicago's Back of the Yards. In the early days of the twentieth century, though, a tiny number of sophisticates embraced immigrant working-class life as an antidote to the poisonous constraints of Victorian bourgeois culture. The first wave were artists enthralled by the color, the noise, the sheer vitality of the immigrant wards and determined to weave that life into an art that defined the modern and a politics that fostered liberation. In the 1920s, "slumming" became a mania, as urban elites sought out the exotic, the "real," wherever they could find it. They packed into the speakeasies that filled the cities after the imposition of Prohibition, where they could rub shoulders with Italian, Irish, or Jewish gangsters. They filled theaters to see ethnic entertainers such as Ragtime Jimmy Durante, late of Coney Island, or the anarchic Marx brothers. And in the most startling turn of them all, they discovered the Negroes living in their midst.<sup>8</sup>

In the early 1920s, sophisticates scrambled to grab a share of the black life that the southern migration was bringing into the cities. White producers mounted all-black musicals. White couples fumbled with the Charleston. And white patrons poured into Chicago's South Side jazz joints and Harlem's nightclubs. If they were lucky, they squeezed into the Vendome, where Louis Armstrong held the floor, or Edmond's Cellar, where Ethel Waters sang the blues. The frenzy was shot through with condescension. White slummers thought black life exciting because it was "primitive" and vital. Visiting the ghetto's haunts became the era's way to snub mainstream society, to be in the avant-garde. "Jazz, the blues, Negro spirituals, all stimulate me enormously," novelist Carl Van Vechten wrote H. L. Mencken in the summer of 1924. "Doubtless, I shall discard them too in time."<sup>9</sup>

When the trains pulled into their terminals, the migrants jostled against one another as they began to gather up their belongings. Finally, they filed onto platforms already mobbed with passengers and porters. Many must have paused, unsure of what to do and where to go, then simply decided to follow the flow of people up the stairs to the stations' grand concourses. There they faced for the first time the grandeur of the city. Detroit's Michigan Central Station was a Beaux Arts masterpiece, a four-story colonnade dominated by a sequence of ornate arches and glittering chandeliers. The rotunda of the Illinois Central Station, built to awe visitors to Chicago's legendary World's Fair of 1893, was swathed in a marble wainscoting fourteen feet high. But nothing surpassed the great terminals of Gotham: Penn Station, with its main concourse sheathed in soaring steel and glass, and Grand Central Station, its great hall flooded with light from three monumental arched windows, its vaulted ceiling decorated by massive murals of the constellations. "You can identify the boys and girls [from the country] if you stand in Grand Central . . . and watch their behavior as they step from the train," *National Geographic* reported. "They hesitate a moment, oblivious to the crowds, looking upward, gripping their bags and bundles, hearing New York, sensing it."<sup>10</sup>

If they were lucky, the newcomers had friends or relatives waiting; they'd scour the crowds for familiar faces or hope to hear some voice calling their name, some voice they prayed they still might recognize. There would be the moments of reunion, hands outstretched in greeting, the sudden comforts of warm embraces. Others had no one to

meet them. How terrifying it must have been to work through the waves of people alone, to step through the terminal's doors and onto the street without a guide. The Illinois Central stood at the southern end of Chicago's Grant Park, just outside the Loop. Detroit's station faced a large park ringed by hotels and boarding houses and beyond that, Michigan Avenue, the busiest thoroughfare on the city's west side. Penn Station fronted bustling Seventh Avenue, while Grand Central stood just twelve blocks away, facing elegant Park Avenue. All the streets pulsed with energy. Pedestrians, newsboys, shoeshine men, and redcaps crowded the sidewalks. Cabbies jockeyed for fares. Automobile horns blasted as drivers battled for places at the curb. Streetcars clanged by, jammed with riders. In the clamor, no one paid attention to a colored man or woman standing alone, wondering where to go and how to make his way in a new America.

American cities didn't simply sparkle in the summer of 1925. They simmered with hatred, deeply divided as always. Native-born Americans had been denouncing foreigners since the first wave of immigrants—the ragged refugees of blighted Ireland—poured into the cities in the desperate days of the 1840s. Time and again in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, urban whites proved themselves capable of savagery toward their black neighbors.<sup>11</sup> But no matter how deep their divisions, the cities never developed the formal systems of segregation perfected in the South. Then came the Jazz Age. And suddenly the very changes that made the cities glitter triggered a backlash so bitter that the nation's great metropolises skidded toward their own version of Jim Crow.

The backlash was fueled by a fear of moral decay. Many native-born whites were appalled by the cities' celebration of immigrant and black cultures, with its implicit condemnation of traditional standards and its unmistakable whiff of amalgamation. Political conflict and economic strain made the backlash even more incendiary. For the better part of a generation, native-born politicians had been trying to check ethnic influence in city governments. Their efforts were driven partly by self-interest, partly by their belief that politicians of immigrant stock simply weren't capable of providing disinterested public service. Calvin Coolidge, a dour Yankee from the tiny hamlet of Plymouth Notch, Vermont, had been propelled to national prominence in 1919, when as governor of Massachusetts he had broken a strike by the

overwhelmingly Irish Catholic Boston police. Four years later, he became president of the United States. But his confrontation with the Boston cops still haunted him. "The unassimilated alien child menaces our children," he told the readers of *Good Housekeeping*, "as the alien industrial worker, who has destruction rather than production in mind, menaces our industry."<sup>12</sup> Politicians weren't alone in sounding the alarm. From his opulent estate just outside Detroit, Henry Ford raged against Jewish bankers and their Bolshevik allies, who were conspiring to destroy all that Anglo-Saxon businessmen had built, his fury tinged with longing for those halcyon days when immigrants and Negroes knew their place.

At least Ford had his millions to console him. Many native-born whites didn't have wealth or power to buffer them from the changes sweeping over the cities. They were solid citizens—schoolteachers and shopkeepers, office workers and factory foremen, tradesmen and housewives—and they'd worked hard to build a secure and respectable life for their families. Many resented the foreigners who intruded on their world. Now the cities were filling with Negroes as well, a race many native-born whites considered even more degraded than the wretched refuse of Europe's teeming shores. Everyone knew that Negroes were a breed apart, they said, charming in their simplicity but also frightening in their volatility, their carnality, their utter incapacity to learn the lessons of civilized society. It hadn't been so bad when only a few blacks lived in the cities. But now they were everywhere, walking the streets, riding the streetcars, looking for jobs and houses that put them alongside decent white people.

In the early 1920s, native-born whites braced themselves against the threats the city posed. Shopkeepers' associations mounted boycotts against foreign-born competitors. Church groups campaigned against lewd entertainment and demanded that Prohibition be enforced. Veterans' organizations tried to purge public schools of textbooks that didn't celebrate Anglo-Saxon culture with sufficient fervor. Foremen and tradesmen used their lodge halls to prevent immigrants and Negroes from gaining access to the better-paying factory jobs. And thousands of people poured into the newest and most exciting of the cities' many fraternal clubs, the Ku Klux Klan, which had been revived by D. W. Griffith's 1915 film, *Birth of a Nation*, a paean to the Reconstruction-era KKK. The founders of the new Klan were businessmen, pure and simple, who stood for "One Hundred Percent Americanism." They protected traditional morality; they defended the virtue of white



womanhood, assailed bootleggers and their besotted clients, celebrated sobriety and the triumph of a Protestant God. They made sure that all those who threatened the nation—blacks, of course, but also Catholics, Jews, and the foreign-born—were kept in their place. It was a brilliant sales job. In the early 1920s, the Klan broke out of its southern base, racing through the small towns of the Midwest and West. And it absolutely exploded in the big cities. By 1924, Detroit's Klan had thirty-five thousand members, Chicago's fifty thousand. The money rolled in, for memberships, robes, rulebooks. And the hatred spewed out from the Klan rallies and marches, protests and political campaigns that spread across urban America.<sup>13</sup>

The anger seething up from the streets blended with the fears of the well-heeled to create a fierce political movement. But the combination wasn't stable. Powerful men like Coolidge and Ford weren't always comfortable with the hol polloi of white America; when fifty thousand Klansmen in full regalia paraded past the White House in August 1925, Coolidge snubbed them.<sup>14</sup> But Anglo-Saxon politicians and businessmen also found plenty of common ground with their robed brethren.

The nativists' campaign reached high tide in 1924. Anti-immigrant groups had been demanding for years that Congress restrict entry into the United States. The pressure became intense in the early 1920s. Veterans groups lobbied their representatives, the Klan launched a massive letter-writing campaign, businessmen endorsed restriction, and nativist scientists and authors appeared before congressional committees to explain the growing threat to the American racial stock. Congress finally surrendered in the spring of 1924. The National Origins Act imposed such strict limits on the number of immigrants allowed into the country that, for all intents and purposes, it ended the great era of immigration, now eight decades old. Ethnic spokesmen pleaded with the president to veto the bill. But Coolidge remained silent, as was his habit.<sup>15</sup>

The nativists followed up their triumph in Congress with a raw display of political power. It was a presidential election year in 1924. When the Republicans met at their convention, a few delegates proposed that the GOP condemn Klan intolerance. But the Invisible Empire's influence was so strong that the proposal went down in flames. The Democrats' convention, held at Madison Square Garden, took an even more bitter turn. For some time, the governor of New York, J. Smith, had been positioning himself to run for the presidency.

Smith was a first-rate politician. But he was also an Irish Catholic, the son of working-class parents, born in a third-floor walk-up on the Lower East Side, educated in the Fulton Street Fish Market and the smoke-filled rooms of Tammany Hall. The party's nativists were apoplectic at the thought of such a man in the White House. So they deadlocked the convention. Ballot after ballot, Smith's supporters and opponents battled over the nomination. At one point in the proceedings, William Jennings Bryan, the ancient populist turned champion of traditional values, stood up to address the convention. The Smith supporters in the gallery, New York's aspiring ethnics, showered him with catcalls. He raised his leonine head to them. "You," he shouted in the voice that had thrilled generations, "do not represent the future of our country." So it seemed. After 103 ballots, Smith—and his immigrant world—went down to defeat.<sup>16</sup>

The cities' white supremacists never had such signal victories. Their campaigns were more local, their initiatives more piecemeal. But they were in their own way even more sweeping than those of the nativists. No one outside the South suggested that the flow of blacks into the cities be prohibited. Bit by bit, however, urban whites carved a color line through the city. When the migration northward began during the war, blacks had been able to find a range of factory jobs. The opportunities shrank in the early 1920s, as many employers decided that all but the most menial and dangerous work should be reserved for whites. More and more white shopkeepers banned black customers from their stores and restaurants. And, most ominously, whites decided that blacks couldn't live wherever they wanted. They were to be hidden away in a handful of neighborhoods, walled into ghettos. Businessmen infused the real estate market with racist rules and regulations. White landlords wouldn't show black tenants apartments outside the ghetto. White real estate agents wouldn't show them houses in white neighborhoods. Bankers wouldn't offer them mortgages. Insurance agents wouldn't provide them with coverage. Developers wrote legal restrictions into their deeds, barring blacks from new housing tracts.

As the structures of segregation hardened, white homeowners became more and more determined to protect their neighborhoods' racial purity. Those whites who could afford to do so left the ghetto. Those who had no black neighbors organized to keep their areas lily-white. They formed legal organizations—protective associations, they called them—to write clauses into their deeds prohibiting the sale of

their homes to blacks. They monitored real estate sales to make sure no one broke the color line. And if a black family somehow managed to breach the defenses, they could always drive them out, quietly if possible, violently if necessary.

The cities weren't segregated in one quick rush. White real estate agents, bankers, and homeowners had begun shaping Chicago's ghetto in the first decade of the twentieth century; white Detroiters didn't follow their example until the late 1910s and early 1920s. What's more, no one coordinated the businessmen's practices and the homeowners' actions. They spread by quiet agreement, sealed by a handshake in the boardroom, a directive from the home office, a conversation over coffee in the neighbor's kitchen. But the forces of the marketplace have a way of imposing discipline on disparate behaviors. By the summer of 1925, racial restrictions were assuming the power of convention across the urban North. As they did, the glittering cities of the Jazz Age were inexorably being divided in two.

The migrants knew about the ghettos. Sometimes they just knew a name—Harlem, Chicago's Black Belt, Detroit's Black Bottom—sometimes even less: a direction from the train station, a stop on the streetcar line, an address committed to memory. So they set out for the subway line that ran uptown, the State Street el to South Side Chicago, or the Michigan Avenue streetcar to Detroit's east side, hoping that this was the correct place to go, that these trains were the last trains of a journey that seemed to be stretching on and on.

Racial etiquette heightened the tension. Southern whites expected blacks to be obsequious. Would northern whites expect the same? What would happen if they accidentally brushed against a white woman in the crush to board the subway train? Could they take the empty seat toward the front of the car, as they had been told they could? Or would it be better to sit in the back and avoid even the possibility of a confrontation? There was only a split second to make a decision that, if wrong, might have catastrophic consequences.

The ride across town must have seemed terribly long. The subway trains rumbled in and out of darkness; the streetcars clattered through the crowded streets. Finally, the migrants saw the stop they'd been waiting for, at 125th Street, on the rim of Harlem; at South State and 26th Street; on St. Antoine Street, in the heart of Black Bottom. As the trains rumbled away without them, the migrants turned toward the

dazzling lights. The main thoroughfares were magical places. Newcomers were amazed by the sweep of black-owned businesses: "restaurants, barbershops, pool halls, cabarets, blind pigs, gamblin' joints camouflaged as 'Recreation Clubs,'" a migrant to Detroit remembered. They were awed by the street life, by the pushcart vendors hawking fresh fruits and vegetables; by the street-corner orators selling socialism, separatism, or salvation; by the jazz and blues clubs pitching their performers to the locals and the slummers. "What a city! What a world!" thrilled poet Arna Bontemps upon his arrival in Harlem in 1924.<sup>17</sup>

But the migrants couldn't live in the stores and the nightclubs. No matter how entranced they might be, they eventually had to leave the gaudy brilliance of the business strips and head down the side streets in search of housing. There were a handful of attractive streets, like Harlem's 138th and 139th: Strivers' Row.<sup>18</sup> For the most part, though, the glamour of the main streets gave way to poverty. Knowing that the migrants had nowhere else to go, landlords had carved Harlem's brownstones and the workmen's cottages of Black Bottom and the Black Belt into tiny apartments, which they rented at exorbitant rates. The profits rarely found their way back into the buildings. Paint peeled from the clapboards. Broken windows remained unmended, leaky roofs unrepaired. As they took in the sights, many migrants sagged with disappointment, but they knew they had few alternatives. So they simply trudged on, looking for the address they'd been given, for a rooming house where they could spend the night, for a flat they could make their own, trying to find a home better than the one they'd left behind.

Watson, Bruce. *Sacco and Vanzetti: The Men, the Murders, the Judgment of Mankind*. London: Penguin Books, 2007.

## Prologue

Neatly wrapped and labeled, thirty identical bombs were mailed from Manhattan in late April 1919. Each was addressed to a prominent American—John D. Rockefeller, J. P. Morgan, Oliver Wendell Holmes—and each was a masterpiece of sinister intent. Enveloped in brown paper, the long, thin packages were marked GIMBEL BROTHERS, NEW YORK—SAMPLE and graced with a drawing of an Alpine mountaineer. Depending on their destinations, some bombs were mailed earlier than others so that all would be detonated in one devastating May Day demonstration.

Along with the more famous recipients, the targets of the plot included many prominent Americans singled out for suppressing radicals. Among these were Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, congressmen from both parties, and Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, the future baseball commissioner whose court had found scores of “Wobblies” from the Industrial Workers of the World guilty of sedition. Seattle’s mayor, targeted for breaking a general strike that winter, received the first bomb.

Taking the tan package from the mayor’s mail, a clerk unwrapped it upside down. A slim vial of acid fell to the floor, leaving hundreds of metal slugs packed around a stick of dynamite. The package was taken to the bomb squad, who admired its ingenuity. The following day in Georgia, an ex-senator received a Gimbel’s package. His wife started to open it but, thinking it contained only pencils, told her maid to put the contents in a cabinet. Tearing off

the paper, the maid unscrewed the top of the enclosed tube. Two screws punctured a glass phial, pouring acid onto cotton wadding. The acid soaked through the cotton. The bomb blew off the maid's hands. That afternoon, a dozen other Gimbel's packages arrived in post offices throughout the nation.

The broadest assassination plot in American history was foiled by a postal clerk. At 2:00 a.m. on April 30, Charles Kaplan was riding the El train home to Harlem. Weary from the night shift, he sat reading a newspaper. He was drawn to a story from Atlanta about a bomb blowing off a maid's hands. As the train rattled him toward home, Kaplan read about the "infernal machine" and the "Negro servant" it had nearly killed. The description of the package struck the clerk as familiar. In the bleary-eyed darkness, he hopped off the El and took a train back to his midtown post office, where he and a supervisor found sixteen identical packages in the parcel post room. All were marked GIMBEL BROTHERS, NEW YORK—SAMPLE. Neither caution nor carelessness explained why they had not been sent. Sealed with a red sticker denoting first-class mail, the bombs had been delayed for insufficient postage.

By the following noon, federal investigators were fanning out through post offices nationwide searching for more infernal machines. Bombs were intercepted in San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Salt Lake City. "I do not recollect anything of the kind in our history more diabolical than this conspiracy," said Postmaster General Albert Burleson, another target of the plot. Federal agents quickly drew up a list of suspects, but did not round them up. Not yet.

No bombs exploded on May 1, 1919. In offices and boardrooms, May Day was quiet. On the street, however, something akin to a culture war raged as veterans back from the Great War slugged it out with their fellow Americans. In Boston, parading Socialists battled the flying fists of soldiers and sailors. More than a hundred people were arrested. In Manhattan, a mob ransacked the offices of a Socialist daily, smashing furniture, confiscating books and pamphlets. Vigilantes in Cleveland battled May Day paraders throughout the city. Lesser disturbances shook Chicago and De-

troit. Meanwhile, accusations flew about who was to blame for the bombs. Rumors hinted of a German plot. Wobblies blamed "capitalist hirelings" trying to pin the crime on the IWW. The Georgia senator who had received a bomb accused "disgruntled anarchists [and] Bolshevik cussedness." As days passed and a final three bombs were found—one congressman tried to open his package but the lid jammed—the "Negro servant" remained the plot's only casualty, but a slow, creeping fear was its consequence.

On May 4, the *New York Times* urged "vigorous prosecution if the Bolshevik movement is to be held in check." Two days later in Washington, D.C., a pageant crowd rose for "The Star-Spangled Banner." When the final strains faded, three shots rang out. A sailor had killed a man who had refused to stand. The audience burst into applause. All that May, talk of terror spread, fanned by Seattle's mayor, Ole Hanson. "I trust Washington will buck up and clean up and either hang or incarcerate for life all the anarchists in the country," Hanson said. "If the government doesn't clean them up, I will." He soon resigned to embark on a nationwide tour warning Americans about the Red menace. He found an eager audience.

The year 1919 had begun in joy and mourning. The Great War was over. Ten million were dead, but at least no more would die in the trenches. The burden of killing had shifted from man to microbes. A deadly strain of Spanish flu was raging. Before the pandemic ebbed, it would kill fifty to one hundred million people, making it the worst plague in history, worse even than the Black Death of the Middle Ages. Advancing like an invading army, the flu swept through American cities and towns, killing 675,000, more than died in the Civil War. Tragic stories—of healthy people dying in a day, of entire companies of soldiers who survived the trenches only to be stricken down after the armistice—spread like the virus itself. The dead, their bodies turned a ghastly blue, were stacked like cordwood. Priests drove horse-drawn hacks through the streets calling people to bring out their dead. By that spring, the pestilence



was waning, yet makeshift hospitals with starched white tents and Model T ambulances still dotted the country, and doctors warned that the virus could strike again the next winter.

The twin tolls of war and disease shaped 1919, the year Americans had longed for since the conflict began. Anticipated as a time of peace, it unfolded in pitched battles on the home front. After sacrificing 126,000 soldiers, America maintained a wartime mentality. The war had thrown the economy into overdrive, doubling prewar prices. Workers in every trade walked off the job. There were dressmakers' strikes, railway strikes, cigar makers' strikes, miners' strikes. Even police went on strike, leaving Boston to rampaging drunks and looters. That summer, savage race riots set off by white mobs broke out in Chicago, Washington, D.C., and two dozen other cities.

The war had finished off the Victorian age, yet no new ethos had taken its place. Each day Americans awoke to a strange new world. From the ashes of tottering empires rose fledgling nations whose names tripped the tongue—Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Not even the laws of science seemed immutable. In late May, Newtonian physics fell to the first concrete proof of Einstein's universe. A few weeks later, another tower toppled as Congress granted women the right to vote. Come fall, baseball's World Series concluded with rumors of a gambler's fix. The year was not over before Americans were shocked by an ad showing a woman holding a cigarette. By the dawn of 1920, the average citizen faced a nation he did not recognize in a world he did not know. And under Prohibition he could not even order a beer and laugh about the changes. Given the uncertainty, scapegoating was only natural. The search begun on that chaotic May Day quickened a month later when bombs came to American doorsteps. Taking no chances with postage this time, the bombers delivered their packages by hand.

Just after 11:00 p.m. on June 2, a tall man wearing a pinstriped suit, a polka-dot bow tie, and a derby strode briskly through a posh neighborhood in Washington, D.C. No one noticed the man or his flimsy suitcase. In it were a stack of flyers, two revolvers, an Italian-

English dictionary, and twenty pounds of dynamite. As the man strolled up the street, Franklin Roosevelt, then assistant secretary of the navy and not yet stricken by polio, parked his car and walked with his wife, Eleanor, into their home. Across the street, Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer turned off the light in his library and went upstairs. He had just undressed when he heard a thump at his front door. The noise was followed by a deafening explosion. Windows shattered up and down the block. "The world is coming to an end!" the Roosevelts' cook shouted. Mansions shook on their foundations, throwing sleeping residents from their beds. Hurrying outside, pajama-clad people smelled a foul odor and saw pieces of flesh splattered through the treetops. Roosevelt rushed to Palmer's home to find his neighbor unhurt. Despite the force of the blast, its lone casualty was the bomber, who had tripped on the steps. But this was only a wake-up call.

For the next ninety minutes, explosions splintered the silence of several cities. In Philadelphia, two bombs caved in the porch of a Catholic church. In Cleveland, a pipe bomb blew off the front of the mayor's house. Midnight bombs destroyed homes in Pittsburgh, Boston, New York, and New Jersey. The targets had one thing in common—each had zealously suppressed radicals, especially anarchists. Lest anyone wonder who was responsible, copies of the same pink flyer were found scattered in the rubble. Beneath a headline—PLAIN WORDS—the flyer began:

The powers that be make no secret of their will to stop here in America the worldwide spread of revolution. The powers that be must reckon that they will have to accept the fight they have provoked. . . .

The challenge is an old one, O "democratic" lords of the autocratic republic. We have been dreaming of freedom, we have talked of liberty, we have aspired to a better world, and you jailed us, you clubbed us, you deported us, you murdered us. . . .

There will have to be bloodshed; we will not dodge; there will have to be murder: we will kill, because it is



necessary; there will have to be destruction; we will destroy to rid the world of your tyrannical institutions.

Thirteen more paragraphs denounced the "capitalist" war in Europe, the expulsion of radicals from America, and the enrichment of a few at the expense of millions. Concluding with the cry "Down with tyranny!" the pamphlet was signed THE ANARCHIST FIGHTERS.

Over the next few weeks, police pieced together clues from the flyers, the debris, and pieces of the man blown to bits on the attorney general's steps. The man's left leg was found on a nearby doorstep, and his torso was discovered a block away. Two boys found a foot and kept it in their refrigerator until their mother came upon it. When forensic experts gently lifted the man's scalp off a roof, a hairdresser examined its thick black locks, identifying the bomber as an Italian in his late twenties. While the hunt continued, the press called for "a few free treatments in the electric chair." "If I had my way," said the evangelist Billy Sunday, "I'd fill the jails so full of them that their feet would stick out the windows. . . . Let them rule? We'll swim our horses in blood up to the bridles first."

Ten days after the bombings, the raids began. Manhattan police stormed the Russian Bolshevik Mission, took several prisoners, and seized pamphlets calling for workers' soviets in America. A few days later, they raided a Socialist school but found just a few men playing cards. Wobblies were rounded up across the nation. As July 4 approached, Americans braced for more bombings. Police guarded federal buildings and prominent homes. Headlines stoked the fear: REIGN OF TERROR PLANNED (*Chicago Tribune*); PLANS FOR WIDESPREAD VIOLENCE AND MURDER (*Cincinnati Enquirer*); CITIES PREPARE FOR REDS (*Los Angeles Times*). The Fourth came and went, but the only explosions were fireworks, the only fighting was Jack Dempsey pummeling Jess Willard to win the heavyweight championship. Yet as the summer dragged on, the alarm lingered. "There is hardly a respectable citizen of my acquaintance who does not believe that we are on the verge of armed conflict in this country," a West Virginia man told the attorney general.

Scarred by war, devastated by plague, terrorized by bombs, America lashed out against a new scapegoat, one that had surged to prominence during the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Reds had stirred up "the Negroes." Reds had caused all those strikes. Reds had infiltrated the schools, the government, the movies. America's first "Red Scare" was shorter than its McCarthy-era successor yet far more intense. Teachers were fired for merely mentioning Bolshevism. A Connecticut man was jailed for praising Lenin. Following a shoot-out in central Washington, one of the accused—both a Wobbly and a veteran—was dragged from jail, castrated with a razor, hung from a bridge, and riddled with bullets. Then the federal government took over.

That fall, Attorney General Palmer, criticized for being soft on subversives, cracked down. Palmer suddenly saw red everywhere, in "the sharp tongues of the Revolution's head licking the altars of the churches, leaping into the belfry of the school bell, crawling into the sacred corners of American homes and seeking to replace marriage vows with libertine laws." Courting public opinion as an election year approached, Palmer ordered the raids that would bear his name. In November, federal agents swarmed through labor halls, arresting hundreds guilty only of being present. Many were beaten or held for months without trial. Just before Christmas, a ship nicknamed "the Soviet Ark" sailed out of New York, taking 249 radicals to Russia. The press and the public cheered. Then on January 2, 1920, came the biggest of the "Palmer Raids," masterminded by Palmer's assistant, future FBI director J. Edgar Hoover. Bursting into meetings and arresting everyone in sight, agents rounded up four thousand aliens in thirty-three cities. Raids were especially intense in Massachusetts's industrial towns—Brockton, Bridgewater, Lawrence, and Lowell. Then, as the frenzy was fading, its ashes were stirred by the story of two Italian immigrants near Boston. On a dark night far from their homes, both were arrested while covering up for their friends, the Anarchist Fighters.

**Directions: Read the excerpt from *Sacco and Vanzetti: The Men, The Murders, the Judgment of Mankind* and answers the below questions.**

1. Based on the reading, describe three effects WWI had on the home front?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What groups became targets or scapegoats for the turmoil that existed in America after WWI? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. In the *Plain Words* flyer cited in the reading, do you believe that the Anarchists were justified in their demands? Why or Why not? Explain.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Which group posed the largest threat to national security during the 1920's? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Is it the role of government to infringe the civil liberties of certain groups if they potentially present a threat to national security? Explain.

# Read + answer questions on worksheet titled "Post War Atmosphere."

## Document A: "Italian America"

### ITALIAN AMERICA

Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti entered the United States in one of the largest movements of people in history. From the beginning of the 1880s to the early 1920s, almost 26 million people came to the United States, some in search of religious and political freedom, most pursuing economic improvement. People had been migrating from Germany, Britain, and elsewhere in Northern and Western Europe in large numbers since the 1840s, and this migration continued unabated. In addition to this migrant stream, people began to arrive in enormous numbers from Southern and Eastern Europe as well—from Russia, Poland, and Austria-Hungary, for example—and in smaller numbers from the Middle East, Asia, and Mexico.

Few of the nationality groups that contributed to this massive influx matched the numbers or the visibility of Italian immigrants in the

United States. What began as a trickle of immigration from the boot-like landmass that became the Kingdom of Italy in 1861 became a flood by the turn of the twentieth century. Between 1820 and 1880, just over 80,000 Italians migrated to the United States; in the following four decades, more than 4 million made the trip, 3 million of them after the new century began. Those that remained here settled largely, though not exclusively, in the northeastern and midwestern United States, and largely, although again not entirely, in urban rather than rural areas.

Italian immigrants usually assumed a place at the bottom of the economic ladder upon their arrival. Most Italian immigrant communities had intellectuals, artists, and "ethnic brokers," small-scale entrepreneurs who functioned as mediators between their immigrant clientele and the larger community. This immigrant population, however, was defined largely by unskilled and semiskilled manual labor, by work in the nation's mines, steel mills, construction sites, and textile and garment factories. Italian men and women, especially the vast majority who came from southern regions of Italy, faced enormous economic hardship. Many young men and women had to leave school early to begin their work lives because their families needed the money. Very few attended high school in the years before World War I—fewer than 1 percent, according to one scholar. Italian Americans' financial struggles, in conjunction with their strikingly large numbers, made them particular targets of urban and labor reformers. As early as 1904, Gino Speranza, future head of the Society for the Protection of Italian Immigrants, was lamenting "How It Feels to Be a Problem." (See Document 1.)

Their engagement—or lack thereof—in the world of politics also made them targets of reformers. Italian immigrants gained a reputation as a profoundly insular population, disengaged from American political and cultural life. They did cluster together, often identifying themselves in terms of their regions, or even villages of origin, rather than in terms of nationality, but this was not unusual. The development of nationalism and a firm sense of national identity were nineteenth-century phenomena in Europe, and many immigrants from across the European continent arrived in the United States thinking of their place of origin in terms of region rather than country. What was unusual about Italian immigrants was their extremely low rate of naturalization and accompanying low levels of political participation. By 1910, only 25 percent of those eligible for citizenship had naturalized.

Not only did many Italian immigrants not naturalize, they also frequently migrated back and forth between the United States and Italy.

They were not alone; many migrants considered their stay in the United States temporary, and returned home one or more times to re-establish connections or to take advantage of the money they earned abroad. It was Italians in particular, however, who earned a reputation as "birds of passage." Although this reputation was unfair to the extent that it singled out Italian migrants, it was hardly inappropriate. In 1908, the year that Sacco—and the largest number of Italians ever—arrived in the United States, census records show that more Italians actually *left* the country than entered. These records did not take into account multiple moves back and forth between the two countries. Moreover, 1908 was the second year of a deep economic depression in the United States. Nonetheless, the statistic is telling.

Italian immigrants were considered by many a highly suspect population, all the more so in an era when the importance of racial and ethnic identity was being reemphasized in ways that challenged the presence of Southern and Eastern European immigrants generally. Racial identity in the United States has of course been critically important from the very first. For African Americans and for Indians, racial identity underlay issues of freedom or slavery, and even life or death. The 1790 Naturalization Act, in effect until the 1950s, defined membership in the American polity in distinctly racial terms, permitting only whites to become naturalized citizens. During the peak years of immigration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, sociologists and other scholars defined race in biological terms—in terms of immutable characteristics that determined appearance, intelligence, and general ability to cope and succeed in society. These biologically rooted definitions were not new, and other white immigrants such as the Irish had faced racial challenges as early as the 1820s and 1830s. What was new in these years was that a much broader proportion of the population in the United States was now defined in racial terms in far more systematic and pervasive ways. Although African Americans, American Indians, and Asian Americans continued to face the onus of racial difference as nonwhites, the Irish had been able to lay claim to whiteness and racial respectability in the decades since their arrival. Now, though, Southern and Eastern Europeans also began to face challenges in racial terms. New racial hierarchies, based on supposedly scientific studies, were postulated in which these immigrants were commonly defined as white—historically a necessity for full access to rights and privileges in the United States—but the quality of their whiteness came under intense scrutiny. Scholars such as sociologist Edward Ross split Europeans into "higher quality" Northern and

Western Europeans and "lower quality" Southern and Eastern Europeans, and certain of them warned against "interbreeding" between such distinct European populations as the English and the Italians. (See Document 2.) They warned, further, that the disproportional increases in Southern and Eastern European numbers, through migration and high birth rates, would destroy the moral and social fiber of the United States. Opponents of immigration, drawing on these scholars' arguments, ultimately succeeded in passing immigration restriction acts in 1921 and 1924 that all but ended Southern and Eastern Europeans' immigration into the United States.

Even before these acts passed, these new racially based distinctions were applied forcefully to Italian immigrants. Social scientists who created racial hierarchies routinely ranked Southern Italians in particular just above African Americans and below all other European populations. They even had their invaluable identity as white challenged at times, as when they were referred to as "white niggers" in the South. In another, more pointed example, in a court case in Alabama in 1922, a Sicilian woman charged with miscegenation (sexual relations across racial lines) was acquitted. Although she had been involved with a black man, the court ruled that she was "inconclusively white." Italian immigrants' whiteness was rarely challenged in these ways, but their presence in the United States, and their potential impact on American society, were routinely attacked.<sup>1</sup>

Group One:  
"How It Feels to Be A Problem"

## PART TWO

### The Documents

#### Italian America

1

GINO SPERANZA

#### *How It Feels to Be a Problem*

May 1904

*When Italian immigrants began entering the United States by the millions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, part of a massive migration of people worldwide, they provoked a quick and often negative response. Italian immigrants and second-generation Italians were not unaware of assaults on their culture and their identity. One response to these assaults, early in the twentieth century, came from Gino Speranza. Born in Bridgeport, Connecticut, in 1872, and trained as a lawyer, Speranza was acutely aware of widespread negative perceptions of Italian immigrants. A longtime advocate for immigrants' rights and founder of the Society for the Protection of Italian Immigrants in 1907, Speranza addressed a native-born American audience pointedly in his article titled "How It Feels to Be a Problem," excerpted here.*

Gino Speranza, "How It Feels to Be a Problem," *Charities*, XII, no. 18 (May 1904): 457, 460, 463.



... Now, considering the large percentage of foreign born in the population of the United States, it is a strange fact how few Americans ever consider how very unpleasant, to say the least, it must be to the foreigners living in their midst to be constantly looked upon either as a national problem or a national peril. And this trying situation is further strained by the tone in which the discussion is carried on as if it applied to utter strangers mile[s] and miles away, instead of to a large number of resident fellow citizens. Perhaps this attitude may be explained by the fact that to the vast majority of Americans "foreigner" is synonymous with the popular conception of the immigrant as a poor, ignorant, and uncouth stranger, seeking for better luck in a new land. But poverty and ignorance and uncouthness, even if they exist as general characteristics of our immigrants, do not necessarily exclude intelligence and sensitiveness. Too often, let it be said, does the American of common schooling interpret differences from his own standard and habits of life, as necessarily signs of inferiority. Foreignness of features or of apparel is for him often the denial of brotherhood. Often, again, the fine brow and aquiline nose of the Latin will seem to the American to betoken a criminal type rather than the impress of a splendid racial struggle.

Then there is another large class of "plain Americans" who justify a trying discussion of the stranger within the gates by the self-satisfying plea that the foreigner should be so glad to be in the "land of the free" that he cannot mind hearing a few "unpleasant truths" about himself.

This is not an attempt to show that the tide of immigration does not carry with it an ebb of squalor and ignorance and undesirable elements. It is rather an endeavor to look at the problem, as it were, *from the inside*. For if America's salvation from this foreign invasion lies in her capacity to assimilate such foreign elements, the first step in the process must be a thorough knowledge of the element that should be absorbed.

Many imagine that the record and strength of the American democracy suffice of themselves to make the foreigner love the new land and engender in him a desire to serve it; that, in other words, assimilation is the natural tendency. Assimilation, however, is a dual process of forces interacting one upon the other. Economically, this country can act like a magnet in drawing the foreigner to these shores, but you cannot rely on its magnetic force to make the foreign an *American*. To bring about assimilation the larger mass should not remain passive. It must attract, *actively attract*, the smaller foreign body.

It is with this in mind that I say that if my countrymen here keep apart, if they herd in great and menacing city colonies, if they do not learn your language, if they know little about your country, the fault is as much yours as theirs. And if you wish to reach us you will have to batter down some of the walls you have yourselves built up to keep us from you. . . .

To feel that we are considered a problem is not calculated to make us sympathize with your efforts in our behalf, and those very efforts are, as a direct result, very likely to be misdirected. My countrymen in America, ignorant though many of them are, and little in touch with Americans, nevertheless feel keenly that they are looked upon by the masses as a problem. It is, in part, because of that feeling that they fail to take an interest in American life or to easily mix with the natives. And though it may seem far-fetched, I believe that the feeling that they are unwelcome begets in them a distrust of those defenses to life, liberty and property which the new country is presumed to put at their disposal. They have no excess of confidence in your courts and it is not surprising, however lamentable, that the more hot-headed sometimes take the law into their own hands. You cannot expect the foreigner of the humbler class to judge beyond his experience—and his experience of American justice may be comprised in what he learns in some of the minor tribunals controlled by politicians, and in what he has heard of the unpunished lynchings of his countrymen in some parts of the new land. What appeal can the doctrine of state supremacy and federal non-interference make to him? Imagine what you would think of Italian justice if the American sailors in Venice, in resisting arrest by the constituted authorities, had been strung up to a telegraph pole by an infuriated Venetian mob, and the government at Rome had said, with the utmost courtesy: "We are very sorry and greatly deplore it, but we can't interfere with the autonomy of the province of Venetia!" . . .

There is one more question that an Italian, speaking for his countrymen here, may urge upon Americans who are interested in the problem of assimilation. It is this: That you should make my countrymen love your country by making them see what is truly good and noble in it. Too many of them, far too many, know of America only what they learn from the corrupt politician, the boss, the "banchiere," and the oftentimes rough policeman. I have been in certain labor camps in the South where my countrymen were forced to work under the surveillance of armed guards. I have spoken to some who had been bound to a mule and whipped back to work like slaves. I have met others who bore the marks of brutal abuses committed by cruel bosses with the consent of their superiors. What conception of American liberty can these foreigners have?

bound to a mule and whipped back to work like slaves. I have met others who bore the marks of brutal abuses committed by cruel bosses with the consent of their superiors. What conception of American liberty can these foreigners have?

Group Two

2

EDWARD ROSS

*The Old World in the New*

1914

*Despite the contributions Italian immigrants made in economic and cultural terms, many continued to express alarm over their burgeoning numbers and their obvious differences from native-born Americans. Edward Ross, a leader in the relatively new field of sociology, was among those scholars who wrote increasingly critical analyses of immigrants' dire impact on American society in the years just before and after World War I. This excerpt from *The Old World in the New* presents the immigration of Italians into the United States as little short of catastrophic.*

Steerage passengers from a Naples boat show a distressing frequency of low foreheads, open mouths, weak chins, poor features, skew faces, small or knobby crania, and backless heads. Such people lack the power to take rational care of themselves; hence their death-rate in New York is twice the general death-rate and thrice that of the Germans. No other immigrants from Europe, unless it be the Portuguese or the half-African Bravas of the Azores, show so low an earning power as the South Italians. In our cities the head of the household earns on an average \$390 a year, as against \$449 for the North Italian, \$552 for the Bohemian, and \$630 for the German. In silk-mill and woolen-mill, in iron-ore mining and the clothing trade, no other nation-

Edward Ross, *The Old World in the New* (New York: The Century Co., 1914), 113-14, 117, 118-19.

ality has so many low-pay workers; nor does this industrial inferiority fade out in the least with the lapse of time.

Their want of mechanical aptitude is often noticed. For example, in a New England mill manned solely by South Italians only one out of fifteen of the extra hands taken on during the "rush" season shows sufficient aptitude to be worth keeping. The operatives require closer supervision than Americans, and each is given only one thing to do, so as to put the least possible strain on his attention.

If it be demurred that the ignorant, superstitious Neapolitan or Sicilian, heir to centuries of Bourbon misgovernment, cannot be expected to prove us his race mettle, there are his children, born in America. What showing do they make? Teachers agree that the children of the South Italians rank below the children of the North Italians. They hate study, make slow progress, and quit school at the first opportunity. While they take to drawing and music, they are poor in spelling and language and very weak in abstract mathematics. In the words of one superintendent, "they lack the conveniences for thinking." More than any other children, they fall behind their grade. They are below even the Portuguese and the Poles, while at the other extremity stand the children of the Scandinavians and the Hebrews. The explanation of the difference is not irregularity of attendance, for among pupils attending three fourths of the time, or more, the percentage of South Italians retarded is fifty-six as against thirty-seven and a half per cent for the Russian-Hebrew children and twenty-nine per cent for the German. Nor is it due to the father's lack of American experience, for of the children of South Italians who have been in this country ten or more years sixty per cent are backward, as against about half that proportion among the Hebrews and the Germans. After allowing for every disturbing factor, it appears that these children, with the dusk of Saracenic or Berber ancestors showing in their cheeks, are twice as apt to drop behind other pupils of their age as are the children of the non-English-speaking immigrants from northern Europe. . . .

Before the boards of inquiry at Ellis Island their emotional instability stands out in the sharpest contrast to the self-control of the Hebrew and the stolidity of the Slav. They gesticulate much, and usually tears stand in their eyes. When two witnesses are being examined, both talk at once, and their hands will be moving all the time. Their glances flit quickly from one questioner to another, and their eyes are the restless, uncomprehending eyes of the desert Bedouin between walls. Yet

for all this eager attention, they are slow to catch the meaning of a simple question, and often it must be repeated.

Mindful of these darting eyes and hands, one does not wonder that the Sicilian will stab his best friend in a sudden quarrel over a game of cards. The Slavs are ferocious in their cups, but none is so ready with his knife when sober as the South Italian. In railroad work other nationalities shun camps with many Italians. Contractors are afraid of them because the whole force will impulsively quit work, perhaps flare into riot, if they imagine one of their number has suffered a wrong.

The principal of a school with four hundred Sicilian pupils observes that on the playground they are at once more passionate and more vindictive than other children. Elsewhere, once discipline has been established, "the school will run itself"; but in this school the teacher "has to sit on the lid all the time." Their restlessness keeps the truant officer busy, and their darting, flickering attention denies them concentration and the steady, telling stroke. For all their apparent brightness, when at fourteen they quit school, they are rarely beyond the third or fourth grade.

As grinding rusty iron reveals the bright metal, so American competition brings to light the race stuff in poverty-crushed immigrants. But not all this stuff is of value in a democracy like ours. Only a people endowed with a steady attention, a slow-fuse temper, and a persistent will can organize itself for success in the international rivalries to come. So far as the American people consents [sic] to incorporate with itself great numbers of wavering, excitable, impulsive persons who cannot organize themselves, it must in the end resign itself to lower efficiency, to less democracy, or to both.



## The Anarchist World of Sacco and Vanzetti

3

LUIGI GALLEANI

*Anarchy Will Be!*

1907

*Luigi Galleani, the fearsome and inspiring leader of the anarchist circle with which Sacco and Vanzetti were connected, wrote extensive and eloquent calls for anarchy. This selection, "Anarchy Will Be!", comes from The End of Anarchism?, written in response to a longtime ally's disavowal of anarchism in 1907.*

...Let us clear up quickly a misunderstanding which has been cleared up many times before, but which arises now and then with the qualms and bigotry of a certain respectable anarchism.

It is the misunderstanding concerning revolutionary expropriation, usually called *theft* by others, although the noun does not fit the deed.

Everyone agrees on one point: in an egalitarian society, where all means of production and exchange are common property and where the products of work have only one purpose—to assure the satisfaction of everyone's needs—theft has no meaning. It is impossible, absurd.

Therefore, among anarchists, no question of principle concerning theft exists.

When it comes to action, or tactics as it is usually called, there was a time when some comrades believed (and some still do) that in order to develop our propaganda, to equip vanguards, to arm them for action, boldly to initiate attacks, or to repel violence by force of arms, financial means would be needed that could not be provided by poor militants with more energy and courage than weapons: so they *expropriated*, as they used to say, with rigorous precision.

Luigi Galleani, *The End of Anarchism?* (Sanday, Orkney, UK: Cienfuegos Press, 1982 [1907]), 58–60, 71.

They took wherever they found it.

What does *expropriation* mean?

It means to take from somebody the goods or real estate that he owns, claiming he has no right to them.

From Saint Clement to Babeuf, Proudhon, Bakunin and the most modest of our comrades, the invalidity of all property titles has never been questioned: expropriation is legitimate unless it ends as its opposite, *appropriation*.<sup>1</sup>

To make myself better understood: if Tom takes Harry's wealth for his own enjoyment, we say that he has appropriated it. The property in question has only changed its titular owner, but as an institution it remains just what it was before. Tom is getting rich, as Harry did in the past, on the shoulders and the labour of harnessed slaves.

Nothing has changed, and there is no reason why we should congratulate Tom for having taken Harry's wealth.

But suppose, as it recently happened, a band of revolutionaries attack a bank; they immobilize the guards, empty the safes and, weapons in hand, defend their retreat. Then, having secured it, they deliver their loot to insurrectionary committees to further the revolutionary movement in their community, to provide the necessary means for attaining victory.

Do you disapprove?

No, you cannot disapprove. There has been expropriation, the very expropriation you have invoked a thousand times as a revolutionary necessity. There has been no appropriation in the sense that the confiscated wealth has been used to re-establish some other private property with all its consequences. Not at all. We are faced exactly with an initial, partial act of revolutionary expropriation. Besides the material advantages for the movement, it initiates, enables and encourages the multitude to proceed to the final expropriation of the ruling class for the benefit of every one. This has been our desire and our aim.

How can we curse, condemn, or reject?

<sup>1</sup>Galleani's knowledge of philosophers and radical thinkers was expansive, and he frequently made reference to them in his writings. Here, he mentions Roman Pope St. Clement (d. 100 C.E.); François Babeuf (1760–1797), a participant in the French Revolution; French radical Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865), who asserted that "property is theft"; and Russian Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1876), credited by many as one of the founders of anarchism. Each, in his own way, was critical of the concept of private property.

Clement Duval, Vittorio Pini, Ravachol<sup>2</sup> have never taken for themselves a single penny of the loot that they obtained with the constant risk of death or life imprisonment. You may say that they have used that money for questionable propaganda means and action and even conclude that it could have been used in a better way. But you can't condemn. . . .

We do not believe there are useless or harmful acts of rebellion. Every one of them, together with the accidents inseparable from any violent change of the monotonous routine of life, has deep echoes and lasting gains, which compensate abundantly for them.

Let us be understood: we are not being nostalgic for unneeded brutality nor for vulgar coarseness. We too would prefer that every act of rebellion had such sense of proportion that its consequences would correspond perfectly to its causes, not only in measure, but also in timeliness, giving it an irresistible automatic character. Then every act would speak eloquently for itself with no need for glosses or clarifying comments. Furthermore, we would like this unavoidable necessity to assume a highly ethical—and even an aesthetic—attitude. . . .

Unfortunately (and we have at length stated why), the individual act of rebellion, due to intrinsic and extrinsic causes, due to the pressures of the moment, the environment and the subject's own psychology, cannot be different from what it is, no matter what our preference may be.

Then it follows that it would be absurd and ridiculous for us to think of compiling a new calendar of saints, the saints of the social revolution, as it would be to think of condemning them posthumously.

No act of rebellion is useless; no act of rebellion is harmful. . . .

In the field of economics—in contrast to the radical movements which do agree in rejecting private property, in advocating collective ownership of the means of production and exchange, in the remuneration of each according to his aptitude and his labour—libertarian communism—once individual property is abolished, the land and means of production made the communal and indivisible property of all—rejects the theory of remuneration, even if it were to involve the total product of labour; it rejects the principle of compensation as irrational,

<sup>2</sup>Clement Duval (1850–1935), Vittorio Pini (d. 1892), and Francois-Claudius Koenigstein (1859–1892), also known as Ravachol, were all active in the French anarchist movement, and were all advocates of revolutionary expropriation—of theft to support revolutionary activity.

unjust and dangerous in so far as it necessarily engenders the authority and the tyranny that make the bourgeois regime infamous; and it proposes, instead, that every member of society, regardless of his aptitudes or work, be entitled to the full satisfaction of his needs, of all his needs. Such satisfaction not only assures the participation of each person in production according to his capacities, but also eliminates the danger of falling once again into a regime of inequality, of authority, of disorder and violence that the social revolution would have abolished.

In the political field, in contrast to the authoritarian goals of the socialists, collectivists, or communists which, because of the foreseeable economic inequalities implicit in their systems, are obliged, even now, to posit a coercive power that contains and appeases their inequities, or, at least, an administration-state which rules and regulates production, distribution and consumption; anarchism proposes, instead, the absolute and irrevocable rejection of government and authority in any form, and in place of the principle of good, fair, brotherly government, it proclaims the *ungovernability* of the individual who possesses within himself the means, the right, and the power for self-government.

Group  
Four

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## Radical Possibility and the Red Scare

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9

LOUIS POST

### *The Deportations Delirium of Nineteen-Twenty*

1923

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*Louis Post was assistant secretary of labor from 1913 to 1921 and witnessed the excesses of the Red Scare firsthand. He published what he referred to as "a personal narrative of an historic official experience," titled The Deportations Delirium of Nineteen-Twenty, just after he left office. This excerpt is Post's account of the mass arrests of suspected radicals in New England, the region where Sacco and Vanzetti lived.*

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Meeting halls and family homes in twenty New England cities and towns were subjected to that ruthless night-raiding of January, 1920. Fourteen of the twenty were in Massachusetts—Boston, Chelsea, Brockton, Bridgewater, Norwood, Worcester, Springfield, Chicopee Falls, Holyoke, Gardner, Fitchburg, Lowell, Lawrence and Haverhill; the remaining six were in New Hampshire—Nashua, Manchester, Derry, Portsmouth, Claremont and Lincoln.

"Concentration points" had been established in both States, mostly in police stations, at each of which an immigration inspector was in attendance with batches of warrants of arrest. Arrests were made, however, quite regardless of warrants.

Nor were search warrants used, though homes were invaded, trunks broken open, personal papers seized and personal privacies shamefully disturbed. Captives were forced to stand in line against the walls of the public-meeting rooms in which they had been caught, and in this position were searched like victims of a predatory holdup.

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Louis Post, *The Deportations Delirium of Nineteen-Twenty: A Personal Narrative of an Historic Official Experience* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970 [1923]), 96–98, 99–101.

Blank questionnaires were filled out by the captors as they questioned their captives. At a hall in Worcester the entire audience attending a publicly advertised meeting, about 200 in all, were questioned, individual by individual, the citizens being thrust out and the aliens, about a hundred, taken to a jail from which all but sixteen were released in the course of the night.

So many prisoners were released with the same contempt for lawful process which characterized the arrests, that the aggregate of arrests in New England can only be estimated. Responsible estimates, however, place the New England total at from 800 to 1,200. A large proportion were released, as arbitrarily as they had been arrested, after periods of imprisonment ranging from a few hours to two or three days.

Altogether the New England raids were disgraceful legal travesties, riotous lynchings in defiance of law by officers of the law; and they were so characterized by a Federal judge of honorable distinction who saw and heard the testimony of the witnesses on both sides. After describing these and other outrages, which had been proved both directly and circumstantially at a hearing on *habeas corpus* writs before him in the United States Court at Boston, this United States Circuit Judge, George W. Anderson, remarked in the course of a comprehensive, convincing and extremely able argument in support of his decision, that "a mob is a mob, whether made up of Government officials acting under instructions from the Department of Justice, or of criminals and loafers and the vicious classes."

Among the meetings raided in New England was one which had assembled to discuss the organization of a co-operative bakery. It was composed of citizens as well as aliens and in about equal proportions. Yet the entire assemblage of thirty-nine persons was arrested and imprisoned in cells until morning. . . .

Captives to the number of considerably more than 400—being from half to a third of the whole number arrested in this part of New England—were taken to the immigration station at Boston and thence to the Deer Island detention place in Boston Harbor. Bitter complaints concerning the circumstances of the arrests and detentions came to the Department of Labor, and in the temporary absence of the Solicitor, who still had Departmental charge of immigration work, the complaints were referred to me. I ordered an investigation by two competent and trustworthy immigration officers, who upon returning from Boston reported that conditions at Deer Island had been for a

few days utterly unfit, but were now greatly improved. In explanation of the original unfitness, they assured me that the fault did not lie with the immigration officials at Boston, for too little time had been given to prepare accommodations for the four hundred prisoners delivered at that station by the Department of Justice. By way of verifying their count, one of the investigators remarked to me that the number of prisoners was so large that when they were unshackled "the chains made a pile *that* high"—indicating with his hand a height of about three feet.

"Pile of chains!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, indeed," replied both investigators in one voice. Then one of them, corroborated by the other, explained: "The Department of Justice marched their prisoners through the streets of Boston to the immigrant station in chains. We know it for we saw photographs of the chained prisoners lined up in a group." One of the investigators added, with a queer glance of the eye, that "nothing was lacking in the way of display but a brass band."

Conditions at Deer Island were at that time still chaotic. There was lack of proper heat for the January weather. There was lack of adequate toilet facilities. Incommunicado exactions were rigidly enforced. One of the captives dashed out his brains in a corridor by plunging headlong from the fifth floor above. He did this in the sight of fellow captives who inferred from their own experiences that he had been crazed by his. Another was committed for insanity. Others were on the verge of insanity from the bewildering circumstances of their captivity.

It was in such bewildering circumstances, terrifying as well as bewildering, that the victims of the raids were given their hearings in deportation proceedings, pursuant to warrants of arrest issued either before or after the raids—some before and some after. Each hearing was conducted by an immigrant inspector authorized by law to conduct such hearings. Each was as a rule held in the presence of a Department of Justice detective who acted both as prosecutor and witness. The accused alien, who in many instances was ignorant even of our language and was not always fairly served by interpreters, was denied the right to have counsel—the temporary rule giving discretion to the inspector having remained in force from less than a week before the raids till nearly four weeks afterwards. But in spite of circumstances so adverse to the prisoners, the immigrant inspectors were obliged to acknowledge their inability to find cause for deportation against a majority. One of the inspectors is on record as testifying

in court that out of from 30 to 35 of the Deer Island "red" cases he had disposed of, he was obliged to recommend cancellation of the warrants of arrest in fully 25, finding even as much as bare technical cause for deportation in less than ten.

Post War Atmosphere:

Directions: In your expert groups read your assigned reading and complete the questions in your section of the chart. However, **all** groups must read document titled “Italian America” by Topp. (see below chart)

<p><b>Italian Immigration to the United States</b></p>	<p><b>Document A: “<i>Italian America</i>”</b> All groups must read</p> <p>When did the majority of Italian immigrants come the United States? What was their role in the social hierarchy?</p> <p>Why were Italians treated so harshly in the United States?</p> <p>Why did many Italians earn the reputation as “Birds of Passage”?</p> <p>Overall describe the reception Italians received when arriving in the United States?</p>
	<p><b>Group One: “<i>How is Feels to Be a Problem</i>”</b> Gina Speranza</p> <p>Describe Speranza’s stance on Italian Immigrants.</p> <p>Identify at least two quotes/words/statements that the author uses to summarize her view of Italian immigrants.</p> <p>What does the Speranza say about the Italian ability to assimilate?</p>
	<p><b>Group Two: “<i>The Old World in the New</i>”</b> Edward Ross</p> <p>Describe the Ross’s stance on Italian Immigrants.</p> <p>Identify at least two quotes/words/statements that the author uses to summarize his view of Italian immigrants.</p> <p>What does the Ross say about the Italian ability to assimilate?</p>

<p><b>Who are the anarchists?</b></p>	<p><b>Group Three: “Anarchy will Be” Luigi Galleani</b> Describe Galleani’s goals he outlines for anarchists.</p> <p>Describe Galleani’s the methods he outlines for anarchists to achieve the goals.</p> <p>Is Galleani radical? Why?</p> <p>Is the fear Americans had during the early 1920’s of anarchists justified? Why or Why Not?</p>
<p><b>How were potential “radicals” treated?</b></p>	<p><b>Group Four: “The Deportation Delirium of Nineteen-Twenty” Louis Post</b> Describe the rights suspected radicals were given at the time of their arrest.</p> <p>Why does Post state that the “New England raids were disgraceful legal travesties, riotous lynchings in defiance of law by officers of the law”?</p> <p>Describe conditions on Deer Island? In your opinion, did the detainees at this facility pose a threat to national security? Explain.</p> <p>Pick out two lines/words or statements that were especially striking describing the conditions.</p>
<p><b>Who were the defendants?</b></p>	<p><b>Group Five: “Who were Sacco and Vazetti? “The good shoemaker” and “the poor fish peddler”? Hardly</b> Briefly identify where each of these men came from and the occupations they had in the United States?</p> <p>What does their actions of fleeing to Mexico and their devotion to Galleani say about their ability to commit murder? Explain.</p> <p>To what extent are Sacco and Vanzetti gentlemen or revolutionaries?</p>

Directions: After you have completed your entire chart in your “home group” complete the below question. Use specific information from your chart and readings.

To what extent did the post-WWI atmosphere lead to the guilty verdict in the Sacco and Vanzetti court case?

## Group Five

### Sacco and Vanzetti Course July, 2009

Who were Sacco and Vanzetti? "The good shoemaker" and "The poor fish peddler"? Hardly

Nicola Sacco (birth name Ferdinando) was born 1891 in Torremaggiore, Italy (Abruzzi) to a somewhat prosperous olive oil dealer; emigrated to USA in 1908 at age 16 with older brother who later returned to Italy; worked construction in Milford, MA and later became an excellent shoe trimmer; at 21 married Rosina (age 17); three children (one died); loving marriage; good rapport with his boss; first radical activity occurred in 1912 defending an Italian immigrant accused of murder (a justice issue). Radical (anarchist) connections grew thereafter and he subscribed to *Cronaca Sovversiva* (Subversive Chronicle), an anarchist newspaper published by Luigi Galleani. Settled in Stoughton, MA until his arrest in 1920 and making \$80.00 per week by then (an excellent factory salary at the time).

Bartolomeo Vanzetti was born in the Piedmont (Northwest) section of Italy, in the town of Villafelletto in 1888 to a very loving mother and a fairly prosperous farmer who would later open a café. A voracious reader with great intellectual curiosity, Vanzetti was very bright and loved philosophy and religious topics especially. Afflicted with pleurisy, he immigrated to the USA in 1908, the same year as Sacco. Lived in NYC, Springfield, MA and elsewhere; worked subsistence jobs in kitchens, construction, etc. Studies drew him to anarchism by about 1912; drawn to *Cronaca Sovversiva* like Sacco. Settled in Plymouth in 1913, became a fish peddler and lived happily boarding with the Brinis family (socialists). Unmarried, but very popular with the Brini children, who saw him as a loving uncle.

**Commonalities:** Both men bright, but uneducated in a formal sense with only rudimentary English skills; neither suffered childhood poverty, but became indignant about exploitation of immigrant labor (both had worked menial jobs) and justice issues about immigrants and workers in their adopted land; both dreamt of revolution, peaceful if possible, violent if necessary, like other active Galleanisti; possessed of dual personalities, gentle with friends and family, but also haters and fanatics. Both were baptized Catholics but rejected religion even before their executions.

**World War I and the Draft:** The Bolsheviks and anarchists saw WW I as an "imperialist struggle". Lenin characterized a rifle with an attached bayonet as a "weapon with a worker at both ends". Galleani and his disciples (including Sacco and Vanzetti) departed the USA in 1917 to avoid the military draft. They spent several months sweltering in the Mexican desert where the heat, isolation and radical company created a crucible for their radical ideas. They returned as committed revolutionaries. Later, their anarchism and alleged "lack of patriotism" (failure to fight to "Save Democracy") would be used against them at trial. They deeply resented the jailing of Eugene Debs, to them the best of all Americans. They became even angrier with the Palmer Raids and deportations of friends and colleagues

**Due:**

## **“America Struggles with Post War Issues”**

**Directions:** Read Chapter 20.1 in your textbook and identify the following terms on a separate sheet of paper.

Nativism  
Isolationism  
Communism  
Anarchists  
The Sacco & Vanzetti Trial  
Quota System  
Red Scare  
Palmer Raids  
Emergency Quota Act  
Boston Police Strike

**Answer the following question:**

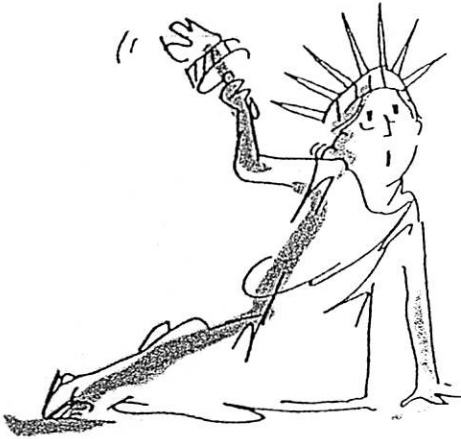
What was America like post WWI? What did this postwar climate lead to?



## 10. FEAR OVERWHELMS THE BILL OF RIGHTS

*You can only protect your liberties in this world by protecting the other man's freedom.  
You can only be free if I am free.*

Attorney Clarence Darrow, *People v. Floyd*, 1920



**Q. A British visitor to the United States in the 1920s wrote: "America is the land of liberty – liberty to keep in step." What did he mean? How true is this today?**

Visit [www.rightsmatter.org](http://www.rightsmatter.org)  
to voice your opinion and discover:

- more on the first Red Scare
- attitudes towards immigrants
- court cases
- definitions
- biographies
- activities

What do you think would happen if you read the Bill of Rights outdoors before a large audience? Would you get blank looks? Signs of interest? Applause?

Almost certainly you would not be kidnapped by the police. That's what happened in 1923 to a famous writer, Upton Sinclair. He began a speech before a large group of striking workers in San Pedro Harbor, California by reading aloud the Bill of Rights. Before he could finish the First Amendment – guaranteeing the right to freedom of speech and assembly – police surrounded him, removing him from the speaker's platform.

As Sinclair later wrote in a letter to the Los Angeles chief of police, the police officers told him that "this Constitution stuff does not go at the Harbor."<sup>13</sup> He was driven from police station to police station in Los Angeles for many hours, without

actually being charged with anything. The Los Angeles police apparently hoped to hold him indefinitely without anyone knowing of his whereabouts.

However, someone tipped off Sinclair's lawyer and he was brought into court after being held in secret for twenty-two hours. He was charged with "discussing, arguing, orating and debating certain thoughts and theories...calculated to cause hatred and contempt of the government of the United States of America, and...detrimental and in opposition to the orderly conduct of affairs of business, affecting the rights of private property and personal liberty...."

In the mind of the local authorities, "personal liberty" and the "rights of private property" went hand in hand. Both appeared threatened when the Bill of Rights was read by someone who sympathized with striking

workers.

We have learned that the civil liberties guaranteed by the Bill of Rights counted for little when the basic civil and human rights of large parts of the population were denied. We have also seen that after the Civil War, there was an opportunity for the country to change direction. If the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution had been interpreted differently by the courts, there may have been a different climate in the country by the following century.

But instead, "Jim Crow segregation" replaced slavery, as the federal government retreated from the promise of Reconstruction. And at the same time, more and more people, both immigrants and citizens, experienced the kind of government tyranny that the Founders had tried to prevent. During a time of fear, not unlike the climate surrounding today's "war on terrorism," people were targeted solely because of their ideas and political beliefs.

One hundred years ago, "anarchists" were believed responsible for many violent acts, including the planting of dozens of bombs in public places. Anarchists, who were mostly immigrants from

Europe, maintained that in a just world there would be no government, but people would govern themselves, hold property in common and work for the common good.

When an American-born anarchist assassinated President William McKinley in 1901, Congress passed laws to keep anarchists out of the country and to deport those who were here already – even if they were totally law-abiding and did not advocate violence for political ends. Under these laws, naturalized citizens (those who were not born here) could be deprived of citizenship if it could be shown they were, or had once been, anarchists.

Anarchists were not the only people to be treated as dangerous subversives. Any "political radical" who questioned the American

economic system, or helped organize trade unions so workers could demand better pay and conditions, was at risk. Called "communists" or "Reds" because of the red flags they carried, they faced mob violence and government raids. Public fears associated with the first "Red Scare" intensified when, in 1917, there was a successful revolution in Russia, which became the Soviet Union.

This "Bolshevik" or communist revolution occurred shortly after the United States entered the First World War. The war was not popular with the American people, and there were large anti-war demonstrations around the country. The government claimed that communists were stirring up anti-war sentiment.

In June 1917, Congress passed an Espionage Act. It



provided for a \$10,000 fine and up to twenty years in prison for disloyal utterances or attempts to obstruct military recruitment. The next year, Congress passed a Sedition Act. It applied the same penalties to "uttering, printing, writing, or publishing" language that was seen as disloyal and which was intended "to cause contempt" towards the "government of the United States, or the Constitution, or the flag." Over 2,000 persons were prosecuted under these acts.

State legislatures and local towns also passed laws barring "seditious expression." There were tens of thousands of prosecutions for distributing literature on the streets, for holding public meetings and for displaying a red flag. So extreme was the fear of dissent and what were called "foreign ideas" that teachers were screened for "loyalty" and several states banned foreign languages in schools.

The attack on dissenting ideas did not end with the end of the war in 1918. In 1919, there was an economic slump and widespread unemployment among returning war veterans. The result was nearly 4,000

or strikes involving four million workers, feeding fears

that society was coming apart, as it had in Russia.

These fears were fanned by the media, especially after bombs went off in eight cities in June 1919. One exploded in the Massachusetts legislature. In September 1919, when the Boston police went on strike for higher pay, the press became nearly hysterical. It depicted the events as "a Bolshevik nightmare" with the city under the control of subversives. In the words of the September 12<sup>th</sup> *New York Times*, the strike provided "a long look at the fires of anarchy and crime that smolder asleep under civilization."

To inflame fears further, white mobs attacked African Americans in twenty-two cities across the country between April and October 1919. State and local authorities claimed to be powerless in the face of these race riots, which left seventy-eight people dead. But they were prepared to arrest those African Americans who defended themselves.

The government seemed less concerned with the *actual* violence directed against African Americans and trade unionists, than with the *imagined* nightmare of a violent attack against the established

order. As organizations like the Ku Klux Klan mobilized to "save" American values from dangerous immigrants and radicals, the U.S. Justice Department, under Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, ordered raids on homes, meeting places, pool halls and other public places in thirty-three American cities.

The "Palmer raids" of January 1920 resulted in as many as 10,000 arrests of suspected "radicals." Most were made without warrants or probable cause of wrongdoing. Nearly a thousand immigrants were deported without any kind of a fair hearing. Many people agreed with the Massachusetts Secretary of State who said if he could, he would take those who were arrested "out in the yard every morning and shoot them, and the next day would have a trial to see whether they were guilty."<sup>14</sup>

The attack on the rights of





some led to the loss of rights for all. Everyone had to think the same way – or else. As one British journalist put it, “America is the land of liberty – liberty to keep in step.”<sup>15</sup>

Against this background, it is easy to see how Upton Sinclair could get arrested for reading the Bill of Rights. But the news was not all bad. The Palmer Raids led to the creation of an organization to challenge violations of rights, and ensure that “liberty” could have its day in court. In 1920, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) was formed by private individuals to be an enforcement mechanism for the Bill of Rights.

In the same year, after more than seventy years of organized struggle, women finally won the vote with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. Their importance in the labor force during the First World War had made it politically impossible to continue to deny them suffrage.

The U.S. Supreme Court was not yet prepared to uphold the First Amendment in the cases it heard involving dissenting ideas. But in this period the court at last took steps to define when speech and ideas *should* be protected, not just from interference by the federal

1927. AUGUST 24, 1927.

TWO CENTS THREE CENTS FOUR CENTS

## PARIS MOBS LOOT SHOPS, BATTLE POLICE, LONDON RADICALS IN NIGHT RIOTING AS SACCO DEMONSTRATIONS GO ON ABROAD

government, but also from state and local repression.

During the 1920s, the Sacco and Vanzetti case offered a unique opportunity for public education. In May 1920, Nicola Sacco and Bartholomeo Vanzetti, who were Italian immigrant anarchists, were arrested and charged with the robbery and murder of a factory paymaster and guard in Braintree, Massachusetts.

The enormous world-wide publicity given their case focused international attention on America’s fear of foreigners and radical ideas, and on possible violations of their due process rights. On the day of their execution, August 23, 1927, *The New York Times* devoted five full pages to the event, and newspapers in several countries gave it front-page headlines. Their deaths in a Massachusetts electric chair sparked huge and angry demonstrations in London, Paris, Geneva and other cities in Europe, South America, Africa and Australia, and the streets of Boston were

besieged. Writers and musicians made sure that Sacco and Vanzetti would not be forgotten.

In 1925, the Scopes “monkey trial” in Tennessee got many people thinking for the first time about the importance of the First Amendment and the free exchange of ideas. Nearly a thousand people crammed into a Tennessee courtroom to witness this test of a law passed by the Tennessee legislature, which made it unlawful to teach in public schools “any theory that denies the story of divine creation of man as taught in the Bible.” Attorney Clarence Darrow defended the young biology teacher, John Scopes, who taught evolution in the classroom, while William Jennings Bryan, a renowned orator and politician, spoke in defense of the new law.

Scopes lost, and it would be decades before the U.S. Supreme Court would rule in cases involving religion and the public schools. But the Bill of Rights was stirring into life.

30



## The 20th Century

[17th & 18th Centuries](#)

[19th Century](#)

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# The Scopes Trial

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Historians who know nothing else about American religion often know one thing for sure: in July of 1925 fundamentalists got their noses rubbed in the dirt at the Rhea County Courthouse in Dayton, Tennessee. That building, of course, housed the famous Monkey Trial, the place where rural traditionalism met and finally bowed to the forces of urban secularism. This image, perpetuated by numerous journalists, by the popular play and movie *Inherit the Wind*, and even by respected textbooks, contains some truth and considerable mistruth. The task is to get it all sorted out.

The energies that culminated at Dayton had been brewing for more than a half century. From the 1870s, Southern evangelicals led the fight against evolutionary teaching (commonly and somewhat misleadingly called Darwinism following the publication in 1859 of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*). After the Civil War, conservative Protestants in the North concerned themselves primarily with the defense of the authority of the Bible. Although they occasionally mobilized against the teaching of evolution, they left that fight mostly to their Southern cobelligerents. (Why Southern rather than Northern conservatives decided to draw a line in the sand over that issue remains unclear. Perhaps traditional assumptions remained so prevalent in Southern culture that Southern legislators believed they could translate them into law without fear of reprisal.)

The 1920s cradled a lasting conflict. Between 1923 and 1925 four Southern states (Oklahoma, Florida, North Carolina, and Texas) tried, with mixed success, to stop the teaching of evolution in the public schools. In the spring of 1925 Tennessee joined the fray by passing the Butler Act, the strongest bill to that point. This law made it illegal "to teach any theory that denies the Story of Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animal." Even so, many prominent Tennesseans

found themselves uncomfortable with the anti-evolution position. In early May a Dayton mine manager and a local druggist (the latter also part-time chairman of the schoolbook committee) met with John Scopes, a young high school science teacher, to discuss resistance. They knew that the American Civil Liberties Union had offered to support any Tennessee teacher willing to defy the statute. They decided to take up the challenge, with Scopes serving as the reluctant point man.

Scopes's friends arranged to have him arrested for teaching the forbidden doctrine. The ACLU quickly assembled its counsel, including the famous trial lawyer Clarence Darrow, a religious agnostic known for defending political and labor radicals. William Jennings Bryan, an attorney, a prominent Presbyterian layman, and three-time Presidential candidate on the Democratic ticket, volunteered his services as counsel for the State. Though hardly a scholar, since the early 1920s Bryan had been waging a highly publicized battle against evolutionary thought, which he considered the nemesis of Christian civilization.

The days surrounding the trial found Dayton swamped with hundreds of reporters, its streets bedecked, carnival-like, with concession stands, toy monkeys, and the bookstands and soapboxes for opportunists of all stripes. Pioneering radio broadcasters and photographers crowded the courtroom. Cable relayed the events to Europe. Historian George M. Marsden sets the scene (*Religion and American Culture*, 184-85).

This was at the height of the age of . . . media-generated national crazes, as well as controversies over changing mores, jazz, new dances, styles of dress for women, and sexually-suggestive Hollywood movies. Proponents of the new, more lenient culture were already deeply antagonistic toward defenders of the old-style Victorian mores, and so made the most of a drama in which science could be pitted against religion, city against rural, and North against South.

The trial itself proved as eventful as the verdict uneventful. The arguments focused upon the state's right to specify what was taught in public classrooms, not the scientific merits of evolution per se. In the course of eight sweltering days of spirited debate, Bryan himself took the stand as an expert witness on the Bible. (How the Bible, rather than John Scopes or the Butler Act, came to be on trial is an intriguing story in itself.) Some observers felt that Bryan acquitted himself ably, while others believed that he disgraced conservative Protestant Christianity by his inability to answer some of Darrow's questions about the Bible's consistency and accuracy. At the end, the jury found Scopes guilty and the judge fined him \$100. The Tennessee Supreme Court later reversed the judgment against Scopes on a technicality, although it upheld the constitutionality of the Butler Act. Bryan died of a heart attack five days after the trial while

napping in a Dayton residence.

## **Guiding Student Discussion**

If sketching the bare facts of the events leading up to the trial is fairly easy, enabling students to grasp its long-range sources and significance in American culture proves more challenging. But also more interesting. You might begin by asking students why so many reasonable Americans pitted themselves against a theory so strongly supported by the professional scientific community. The answer lay in the assumptions that had informed the thinking of many conservative Protestants (and for that matter many conservative Catholics and Jews) from the mid-nineteenth century onward. Drawing upon Common Sense Realism, a philosophy rooted in the Scottish Enlightenment, Victorian Americans widely presumed that true science consisted of unbiased observation of the plainly observable facts of nature. Since the fossil evidence for partly evolved human beings remained sketchy at best, some conservative Christians attacked evolution as scientifically unsupported. Moreover, since Holy Scripture had proved itself truthful in other respects, there was no reason to doubt the veracity of the *Genesis* account of human origins. The point was clear: the Bible had proved itself more, not less, scientific than the upstart science of Darwinism. Bryan spoke for millions when he snorted of Darwin's theory: "It is millions of guesses strung together."

Students need to understand that resistance to Darwinism stemmed from other, less tangible sources as well. The most salient, undoubtedly, was the sense that evolutionary teaching undermined the authority of the Bible in general. If the Scriptural account of human beginnings had to be reinterpreted as merely symbolic, then what else would have to be reinterpreted as merely symbolic? The miracles of Jesus? The Resurrection? Students do not need to share the world-view of conservative Protestantism in order to appreciate the apprehension that thoughtful (as well as not-so-thoughtful) adults felt when a fundamental source of authority was called into doubt.

A host of additional factors, which students can readily grasp, fueled the flames. Fundamentalists took note, for example, of the social location where Darwinism arose: among agnostic intellectuals in Britain. And under the guise of Nietzschean philosophy it seemed to serve as a covering rationale for the Might-Makes-Right ideology of German aggression in the Great War. Fundamentalists also noticed that evolutionary assumptions flourished among upper-class academic elites, especially in the urban Northeast and Midwest. Resistance grew especially acute when such conservatives saw their sons and daughters going off to college and, faced with teachings that contradicted their parents' beliefs, seemed to lose their

faith entirely.

Finally, students should view the events in Dayton not simply as a response to outside threats but as a product of conservative initiatives. Rather than assuming (as many historians do) that conservative Protestants were backwoods rubes fighting for their lives in the face of a modern juggernaut, what would happen if we turned that scenario around and assumed that fundamentalists represented the aggressors? Nearly every day throughout the 1920s barnstorming evangelist and healer Aimee Semple McPherson appeared in somebody's daily newspaper. Billy Sunday's star shone almost as brightly. Within the evangelical subculture scores of personalities, such as evangelist Paul Rader and author William Bell Riley (mentor of Billy Graham), functioned with unquestioned authority. One thing remained clear for such conservatives: the battle for the schools would serve as a battle for the historically Christian character of American civilization itself. Evolutionary teaching in the schools thus acquired powerful symbolic value, much as alcohol or immigrant Roman Catholics had in previous decades. Fundamentalists, like almost everyone else, proved that they were prepared to fight, and fight hard, for the dominance of their symbols.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of teaching these materials will be the question, who really won in Dayton? On one hand it is evident that conservatives suffered a crushing defeat in the minds of secular newspaper editors and journalists like H. L. Mencken. They also fell into everlasting disrepute among academics, humanists, and scientists alike. To this day the term fundamentalist evokes images of bigotry and ignorance on secular and not-so-secular college campuses. On the other hand, the teaching of evolution effectively disappeared from the nation's public schools until the 1960s. And even then the fight went on. After World War II, the ranks of Southern Baptists and Pentecostals, who resisted evolutionary teachings privately if not always publicly, swelled by the millions. The rise of creation science in the 1980s, and the continuing skirmishes in the courts over those matters into the late 1990s, lend credence to Gallup polls that show that nearly half of adult Americans and one-fourth of college graduates continue to doubt Darwinian explanations of human origins. Far from being an aberration, the Scopes Trial represented one of the deepest and most persistent conflicts of modern American culture. The goal is to help students see it as an integral though painful part of different Americans' attempts to come to terms with modernity, and with each other.

## **Historians Debate**

In recent years, a growing stream of historical works have debunked the notion that Americans have always considered religion and science at odds with each



# The Twenties

From *A Walk Through the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* with Bill Moyers

1. What is Bill Moyers trying to accomplish with this history of the 20s?

2. _____ May Care	3. Old _____
Romantic version of the 20s risk-taking Popular memory of the 20s Rainbows	Doctor 50 miles away (and expensive) High infant mortality Hard Work

Moyers on his father and about history: "like most people he puts aside the painful memories to cherish the happy ones"

4. List some of the "simple pleasures"

5. What gave the 20s their excitement?

6. Explain: "Victorianism was dead"  
(seeing more of the "new woman")

7. Contested definitions of flapper

8. Stats on prohibition:

9. Significance of prohibition

10. Why wasn't federal enforcement successful?

11. Work for most Americans was . . . .

12. The movies were NOT focused on

13. Rather they focused on

14. What did the movies do to America?

15. But the highest respect went to (not an athlete) . . . because

**16. Major effects of the Great War****17. Who said "Machinery is the new Messiah?"****18. What if a customer wanted a Ford that wasn't black?****19. Phone stats (and how did one dial her phone?)****20. The other new way to send a human voice across the miles?****21. Extravagance: "Everybody had 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ... " diamonds!"****22. Man in blue coat made how much in a week?****23. Bull market peaks:****24. Explain: "low margin rules"****25. How do memory and fact diverge with regard to the economic situation in the 20s?****26. Man in grey shirt (with the hair) makes how much an hour? (which buys ...?)****27. Woman in red blouse makes how much in a week?****28. Economists say the depression was caused by ....****29. But \_\_\_\_\_ of the nation lives in poverty. (They weren't doing much "consumer spending")****30. The 20s were NOT a prosperous time for:****31. Funny: even the "poor" remember the 20s fondly ... how is this possible?  
(Bring this to bear on the puzzle Moyers presents at the beginning of the show.)****32. The role of hope and the installment plan on the phenomenon in question 31:****33. The presidents as optimists?**

34. Harding: didn't want to be the best president. What did he want?
35. "Silent Cal" Coolidge who said, "a man who builds a factory builds a temple," believed prosperity was created by whom?
36. Hoover's reputation upon taking office:
37. What was wrong with Smith, Hoover's opponent in the 1928 election?
38. Hoover's presidency engulfed by . . .
39. The 20s arose out of
40. Union movement in 20s
41. Why is the Sacco and Vanzetti case so controversial?
42. What did liberals enjoy about the Scopes monkey trial according to the grey shirt (hair) man?
43. The dualism of the new woman
44. Race relations
45. KKK's power in Indiana
46. lynching

Worth noting: "The 20s had not two but countless faces, some of them ugly and hateful." (But some that we thank for being so good, so honest, and so dear—like any age, no?)

Berenson/Tallevi

US 32

Read anno lat!

## 27 REPUBLICAN RESURGENCE AND DECLINE

In the aftermath of World War I and the collapse of Woodrow Wilson's health and his presidency, the Republican party regained control of the White House and the Congress. President Warren G. Harding promised the nation a "return to normalcy." This meant abandoning the efforts of Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt to promote political reform and economic regulation. Instead, the Republicans would revive the pro-business orientation that had served the party so well during the Gilded Age. Harding's successors, Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover, shared this philosophy. Coolidge, who assumed office in 1923 upon the death of Harding, proclaimed that the "business of America is business."

To foster the growth of business, the Republicans emphasized reduced government spending, lower taxes, and higher tariffs. Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon, a wealthy Pittsburgh banker and industrialist, slashed personal income and estate tax rates and sharply reduced federal government spending. Coolidge once remarked that if the federal government disappeared, few would notice and even fewer would regret it. At the same time, Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover worked closely with business leaders to create benefits for workers so as to reduce the appeal of trade unions. He also established new government initiatives to help mediate disputes between labor and management and thereby avert strikes and boycotts.

The Democrats, meanwhile, fragmented along sectional lines that reflected the cultural civil wars of the decade. The rural faction, rooted in the South and West, sustained a commitment to cultural populism. This meant support for Prohibition, fundamentalism, the Klan, and government support for farmers. The urban faction of the party, centered in the growing cities of the East and Midwest, depended for its support on immigrant groups that were largely Catholic or Jewish. They tended to oppose Prohibition and recoil from the Protestant orthodoxy of their rural counterparts.

The split within the Democratic party turned into a chasm at the 1924 na-

tional convention in New York. Efforts to unify the divided party proved fruitless. Urban delegates dismissed the "rubes and hicks" from "the sticks" while populist spokesmen charged that metropolitan Democrats were "rooted in corruption, directed by greed and dominated by selfishness." A northern effort to pass a resolution condemning the Ku Klux Klan aroused bitter opposition from the southern delegates, and failed by one vote.

Progressives in both parties felt alienated by the conservative spirit of the times. In the 1924 election they rallied their support behind the third-party candidacy of Robert La Follette of Wisconsin, who headed a revived Progressive party. La Follette and the Progressives adopted a pro-labor and pro-farm platform that echoed the Populists: it called for federal ownership of railroads and utilities, higher taxes on the wealthy, the end of child labor, and conservation of natural resources. La Follette received the endorsement of the Socialist party and the American Federation of Labor, and he drew nearly 5 million votes, mostly from disaffected Democrats. Nevertheless, he still finished a distant third behind Coolidge and Davis.

Four years later Herbert Hoover rode the wave of economic prosperity into the White House. In his acceptance speech he predicted the "final triumph over poverty," and in his inaugural address he declared that he "had no fears for the future of our country. It is bright with hope." Hoover embodied the principles of rugged individualism and equal opportunity embedded in the American experience. Although a staunch supporter of corporate interests and ardent defender of Prohibition, he was a more progressive thinker than either Harding or Coolidge. Hoover believed that capitalism had advanced beyond the initial stage of cut-throat competition and was entering a period of rational cooperation in marketing, wage policies, and product standardization. He also argued that it was in the best interests of corporate America for businesses to engage in voluntary acts of welfare capitalism, extending benefits to workers in order to eliminate the need for trade unions and to blunt the appeal of socialism.

Hoover was by far the best qualified and most able of all the Republican presidents during the twenties, but he assumed office in 1929, the year in which the Great Bull Market collapsed and the nation began to spiral downward into the worst economic depression in its history. To be sure, Hoover did not cause the Great Depression, but he failed to recognize ominous warning signals.

The Great Depression deepened quickly after October 1929 and spread across the country. In 1930 alone almost 1,300 banks closed their doors. During 1931 another 2,300 collapsed. Unemployment rose from 3 percent in 1929 to 25 percent in 1933, meaning that almost 13 million people found themselves jobless.

Statistics hardly convey the human costs of the depression. Prolonged unemployment led people to lose their homes and farms. By the thousands, the displaced and dispossessed began to roam the streets and byways, looking for work, begging for money, and sleeping on benches or the ground. Suicides increased by 30 percent between 1929 and 1932, and marriage and birth rates plummeted.

Those already living on the margin of society were especially hard hit: African Americans, Mexican-Americans, and recent immigrants. Yet for all of the depression's devastating effects, most Americans refused to succumb to fatalism. They persevered, displaying a gritty tenacity that was both inspiring and ennobling. They refused to let hard times break their spirits or corrupt their dignity. As Ma Joad declares in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1936), "They ain't gonna wipe us out. Why, we're the people—we go on."



## 211 A Black Writer on the Harlem Renaissance

During the 1920's, there was a cultural renaissance, or rebirth, in black culture that came to be known as the "Harlem Renaissance." An extremely talented group of writers and poets began to speak out against injustices in America and to write of the joys, sorrows, and hopes of black Americans.

Black pride was aroused by these writers and by America's growing interest in black music, art, and entertainment, especially in the Harlem area of Manhattan in New York City. Jazz music became the rage, and many black entertainers became extremely popular and famous, as did many nightclubs in Harlem. In this selection, Langston Hughes, one of the leading black writers of that time, wrote about the Harlem Renaissance.

### READING FOCUS

1. What effect did white audiences have on black entertainers?
2. According to Hughes, what was the "Harlem Renaissance" really like?
3. What effect did the Harlem Renaissance have on the "ordinary" Negro?

The 1920's were the years of Manhattan's black Renaissance. It began with the musical revue *Shuffle Along*. It reached its peak just before the crash of 1929, the crash that sent Negroes, white folks, and all rolling down the hill.

*Shuffle Along* was a honey of a show. Swift, bright, funny, carefree, and gay, with a dozen danceable, singable tunes. Everybody was in the audience—including me. People came back to see it many times. It was always packed.

To see *Shuffle Along* was the main reason I wanted to go to Columbia. When I saw it, I was thrilled and delighted. From then on I was in the gallery of the Cort Theatre every time I got a chance. *Shuffle Along* gave just the proper push—a pre-Charleston kick—to that Negro vogue of the 1920's that spread to books,

African sculpture, music, and dancing.

The 1920's brought the rise of Roland Hayes, who packed Carnegie Hall; the rise of Paul Robeson in New York and London; the booming voice of Bessie Smith on thousands of records; and the rise of that grand comedienne of song, Ethel Waters. The 1920's brought Louis Armstrong and Josephine Baker.

White people began to come to Harlem in large numbers. For several years they packed the expensive Cotton Club on Lenox Avenue. But I was never there, because the Cotton Club was a Jim Crow club for gangsters and rich whites. They did not want Negro customers, unless you were someone famous like Bojangles [a dancer]. So Harlem Negroes did not like the Cotton Club and never appreciated its Jim Crow policy in the very heart of their dark community. Nor did ordinary Negroes like the growing numbers of whites in Harlem after sundown, filling the little cabarets and bars. Formerly only colored people laughed and sang there. Now strangers were given the best ring-side tables to sit and stare at the Negro customers—like amusing animals in a zoo.

The Negroes said: "We can't go downtown and sit and stare at you in your clubs. You won't even let us in your clubs." But they didn't say it out loud—for Negroes are practically never rude to white people. So thousands of whites came to Harlem night after night, thinking the Negroes loved to have them there. They firmly believed that all the people who lived in Harlem left their houses at sundown to sing and dance in nightclubs, because most of the whites saw nothing but the nightclubs, not the houses.

Some of the small clubs had people like Gladys Bentley, who was something worth discovering in those days, before she got famous. For two or three amazing years, Miss Bentley sat and played a big piano all night long, without stopping. She slid from one song to another, with a powerful and continuous underbeat of jungle rhythm. Miss Bentley was an amazing exhibition of musical energy—a large, dark, masculine woman, whose feet pounded the floor while her fingers pounded the keyboard—a perfect piece of African sculpture, made alive by her own rhythm.

But when the place where she played became too well known, she began to sing with an accompanist, became a star, moved to a larger place, then downtown, then to Holly-

Adapted from "When the Negro Was in Vogue" in *The Big Sea* by Langston Hughes.

wood. The old magic of the woman and the piano and the night and the rhythm are gone. But everything goes, one way or another. The 1920's are gone and lots of fine things in Harlem night life have disappeared like snow in the sun—since it became completely commercial, planned for the downtown tourist trade, and therefore dull.

The dancers at the Savoy even began to practice acrobatic routines. They did absurd things for the entertainment of whites that probably never would have entered their heads to attempt just for their own amusement.

Some critics say that that is what happened to certain Negro writers, too. They stopped writing to amuse themselves and began to write to amuse and entertain white people. In so doing they distorted their material and left out their American brothers of a lighter complexion. Maybe it's true, since Negroes have writer-racketeers like any other race. But I have known almost all of them, and most of the good ones have tried to write honestly and express their world as they saw it.

All of us know that the happy, sparkling life of the so-called Negro Renaissance of the 1920's was not so happy and sparkling beneath the surface. But it was a period when, at almost every Harlem uppercrust dance or party, one would be introduced to various distinguished white celebrities who were there as guests. It was a period when preachers opened up shouting churches as sideshows for white tourists. It was a period when every season there was at least one hit play on Broadway acted by a Negro cast. And when books by Negro authors were being published with much greater frequency and given much more publicity than ever before or since. It was a period when white writers wrote about Negroes more successfully (commercially speaking) than Negroes did about themselves. It was the period when Ethel Barrymore appeared in blackface in *Scarlet Sister Mary*. It was the period when the Negro was in vogue.

I was there. I had a swell time while it lasted. But I thought it wouldn't last long. For how could a large and enthusiastic number of people be crazy about Negroes forever? But some people in Harlem thought the race problem had at last been solved. They were sure the New Negro would lead a new life from then on in green pastures of tolerance created by Countee Cullen, Ethel Waters, Claude McKay,



Langston Hughes

Duke Ellington, Bojangles, and Alain Locke.

I don't know what made any Negroes think that—except that they were mostly intellectuals doing the thinking. The ordinary Negroes hadn't heard of the Negro Renaissance. And if they had, it hadn't raised their wages any. As for all those white folks in the speakeasies and night clubs of Harlem—well, maybe a colored man could find *some* place to have a drink that tourists hadn't yet discovered.

## READING REVIEW

1. (a) What effect, if any, did white audiences have on the work of the black writers and entertainers? (b) What evidence did Hughes present to support his conclusion?
2. (a) What was Hughes' attitude toward black intellectuals? (b) toward the ordinary people of Harlem?
3. (a) Why did some people feel the race problem had been solved? (b) Did Hughes agree with this assumption? Why or why not?

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY 2

### The Spirit of the New Negro

Primary Source: *New York Amsterdam News*, about 1929–1930

*During the first three decades of the 20th century, the expression "New Negro" was widely used to suggest a more confident spirit among African Americans. In general, the New Negro was characterized by self-sufficiency, political militancy, and racial pride—unlike the "old Negro," who had sought to avoid conflict by accommodating whites. Writers often debated over which political and cultural movements best represented the New Negro. The following editorial originally appeared in the New York Amsterdam News, a leading black newspaper published in Harlem.*

To our way of thinking the New Negro, if there is such, is dependent upon himself for his food and thinking—a Negro who has the ideal of a spiritually and economically independent group working in harmony with and being a part of the larger American group. The New Negro is possessed of a new spirit. First, he believes in self-support. He supports his family; and helps to build a foundation for racial self-support. To do this, he believes it is not only necessary to talk "race pride" but to act it. Hence he buys from a Negro grocer wherever he can; he goes to a Negro church; he has insurance in a Negro insurance company; he puts his money in a Negro bank; he acts race pride.

Second, the New Negro is a pioneer for his people. The New Negro launches out into business. (He may fail and the "old" Negro may laugh at him.) The New Negro encourages the pioneer in other lines. He is willing to "take a chance" to build for the future.

Third, the New Negro thinks straight. Because he is born of the new spirit of freedom, he is determined to have freedom in all its phases. He is willing to bear all its responsibilities. He wants all of its privileges. He refuses to believe he is different from or inferior to any other of God's children. But he is not raising too big a row about it.

The New Negro believes in God. He may be gradually changing his theology. It is perhaps wise that he should. But he believes in God. A hundred years ago a New Negro walked out of St. George's Church, Philadelphia, and preferred to worship in an old blacksmith shop which was bought by black people than in a fine house for which he did not pay. He believes that self-support is of God.

The New Negro has a new spirit, not necessarily a diploma, a white collar, a salary from charity organizations—he believes in God and himself and his future and is hard at work.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the attributes of the New Negro as described in this editorial. In your opinion, does the writer place greater emphasis on political action or on economic action?
2. The tone of a piece of writing is an expression of the writer's attitude toward his or her subject. How would you describe the tone of this editorial?
3. In what ways did Zora Neale Hurston exhibit the characteristics of the New Negro?
4. Compare the ideas expressed in this editorial with those of a contemporary African-American leader, such as Jesse Jackson, Louis Farrakhan, or Coretta Scott King.

## *An Appeal to the Soul of White America* by Marcus Garvey (1923)

LET WHITE AND BLACK STOP DECEIVING THEMSELVES. LET THE white race stop thinking that all black men are dogs and not to be considered as human beings. Let foolish Negro agitators and so-called reformers, encouraged by deceptive or unthinking white associates, stop preaching and advocating the doctrine of "social equality," meaning thereby the social intermingling of both races, intermarriages, and general social co-relationship. The two extremes will get us nowhere, other than breeding hate, and encouraging discord, which will eventually end disastrously to the weaker race. . . .

Prejudice we shall always have between black and white, so long as the latter believes that the former is intruding upon their rights. . . , and not only prejudice, but riots, lynchings, burnings, and God to tell what next will follow! . . . To imagine Negroes as district attorneys, judges, senators, congressmen, assemblymen, aldermen, government clerks and officials, artisans and laborers at work, while millions of white men starve, is to have before you the bloody picture of wholesale mob violence that I fear, and against which I am working...

There is but one solution, and that is to provide an outlet for Negro energy, ambition, and passion, away from the attractions of white opportunity and surround the race with opportunities of its own. . . . The Negro must have a country and a nation of his own. If you laugh at the idea, then you are selfish and wicked, for you and your children do not intend that the Negro shall discommode you in yours. If you do not want him to have a country and a nation of his own; if you do not intend to give him equal opportunities in yours, then it is plain to see that you mean that he must die, even as the Indian, to make room for your generations.

*According to Garvey, how can we define nationalism?*